

6. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIS

SMP received 460 public and agency letters, e-mails, and oral testimonies on the Green Line Draft EIS during the 45-day public comment period from August 29 to October 14, 2003. These letters and testimonies contained a total of 3,369 separate comments.

Written and oral comments were received from individuals; community groups; institutions; non-profit organizations; businesses; the City of Seattle; and federal, state, regional, and local agencies during the comment period. A public hearing on the Green Line Draft EIS was held on September 29, 2003 in the Seattle Center Northwest Rooms.

The comments were reviewed and categorized based on their subject matter. SMP staff and the EIS technical authors then reviewed the comments pertinent to their area of expertise, provided responses, and updated their analyses for the Final EIS as appropriate. Several SMP staff read all of the comments. All comments and responses are part of the Final EIS and will be considered by decisionmakers, including the SMP Board of Directors.

As part of the response to comments and to reflect ongoing work, this Final EIS includes a Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative, which consists of components from the alignment and station alternatives that are analyzed in the EIS, represents SMP staff's recommendation as of January 2004. The Preferred Alternative does not represent SMP Board action; rather, it is proposed as staff's recommendation based on engineering, design, and environmental analysis and community involvement.

Volumes Five and Six of this Final EIS include a copy of each of the comment letters, emails, and the hearing transcript followed by responses to each of the comments. Many of the comments received were on similar topics. A brief summary of the comments follows. This summary is not intended to be a complete or exhaustive list of the issues raised by commenters. The responses in Volumes Five and Six address each comment, not only the ones reflected in this summary.

6.1 FEDERAL AGENCIES

Four federal agencies wrote comments letters on the Draft EIS. The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration provided information on obtaining federal funding and assistance through the Federal Transit Administration on future monorail phases. The U.S. General Services Administration wrote regarding the Jackson Federal Building located at 915 Second Avenue. Amtrak alerted SMP to potential Green Line impacts on the King Street Station and BNSF Tracks. The Environmental Protection Agency wrote a letter in support of the project and urged SMP to work with other agencies to coordinate multi-modal connections. EPA rated the EIS LO (Lack of Objections).

6.2 STATE AGENCIES

Several state agencies wrote letters responding to the Draft EIS. The State Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation letter concurred with the Draft EIS findings and discussed potential mitigation. The Department of Fish and Wildlife wrote to address issues related to plants and animals and water quality in the Lake Washington Ship Canal and Longfellow Creek. The State Department of Ecology discussed stormwater and contaminated soils and sediments. The State Department of Natural Resources letter discussed the potential lease of Department of Natural Resources-owned land for the Green Line and water quality and habitat issues. The State Department of Transportation addressed potential impacts to WSDOT facilities, the lead federal agency, the relevance of a 4(f) evaluation, environmental justice, and the context of the Green Line in the regional transportation system.

6.3 CITY OF SEATTLE

City of Seattle letters were received from the Mayor's Office, Seattle Planning Commission, Seattle City Council, Pedestrian Advisory Board, and Bicycle Advisory Board. The Mayor's Office provided a detailed review of the Draft EIS and provided suggestions and comments in most subject areas. The Planning Commission letter provided suggestions on conducting the impact analysis and developing mitigation measures. The Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board discussed the loss of parking on Second Avenue, construction impacts, sidewalk conditions in the Crown Hill neighborhood, and lighting. The Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board's letter covered impacts to bicycle routes in Downtown, West Seattle, and Seattle Center; bicycle parking; and bicycle access on trains and to stations. The Seattle City Council letter addressed mitigation; bicycle facilities; parking; coordination with Metro; impacts to open spaces, recreational facilities, and businesses; visual quality; tree protection; and noise and vibration.

6.4 REGIONAL AND LOCAL AGENCIES

Several regional and local agencies including Sound Transit, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, King County Metro Transit, King County Wastewater Treatment Division, Puget Sound Regional Council, Washington State Major League Baseball Stadium Public Facilities District, Washington State Public Stadium Authority, South Seattle Community College, Seattle Public Schools, Ballard High School Leadership Team, and Port of Seattle provided comments on the Draft EIS.

- Sound Transit expressed interest in coordinating on fare structure and collection and on construction and cumulative impacts associated with Link light rail. Sound Transit also discussed implications of the No Action Alternative, various potential transportation impacts, displacements, and cultural resources.
- Puget Sound Clean Air Agency suggested mitigation measures to protect air quality.
- King County Metro addressed potential impacts to bus operations, intermodal connections, and bus revenue impacts.
- King County Wastewater Treatment Division provided a list of wastewater facilities that are within Green Line construction areas and suggested ways to coordinate with the King County Wastewater Treatment Division.
- Puget Sound Regional Council's letter covered transportation connections, land use near stations, pedestrian and bicycle access, effects on bus service, mitigation, impacts of columns, air quality, economics, and references to and inclusion in Vision 2020 and Destination 2030.
- South Seattle Community College expressed a preference for the 35th Avenue SW/SW Alaska Street route in order to avoid impacts to Fauntleroy businesses.
- Seattle Public Schools addressed potential impacts to the following facilities: Ballard High School, Memorial Stadium, Center School, John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence, and Jefferson Square.
- The Ballard High School Leadership Team discussed potential impacts to the high school including construction, parking, traffic, pedestrian safety, noise, vibration, visual quality, public services, and utilities.
- The Washington State Major League Baseball Stadium Public Facilities District expressed a desire for a Safeco Field Station.
- The Washington State Public Stadium Authority addressed parking, truck circulation, pedestrian circulation, economics, aesthetics, public services, utilities, and parks.

- The Port of Seattle discussed freight mobility, coordination with other projects and transit service providers, construction impacts, operations center expansion, parking, access, uses under the guideway, navigable waterways, and effects on Port projects.

6.5 OTHER

Individuals, community groups, institutions, non-profit organizations, and businesses also provided comments. The most common comments for these types of commenters are summarized below by segment.

6.5.1 Ballard

The primary issues addressed in comments from Ballard were related to transportation issues, especially parking, traffic, and sidewalks.

6.5.2 Interbay/Magnolia

Many commenters (about 15) expressed a preference for an Interbay Operations Center rather than a SODO Operations Center. Aside from the Operations Center location, the most common comments regarding Interbay concerned impacts to traffic and truck circulation and Fishermen's Terminal. More comments supported Alternative 2.1 than Alternative 2.2.

6.5.3 Queen Anne/Seattle Center/Belltown

Some commenters (about 15) expressed a preference to avoid Alternative 3.1 (Seattle Center/Republican) and some (about 50) expressed a preference to avoid Alternative 3.2 (Mercer). The most common concerns for those opposing Alternative 3.2 are traffic, visual quality, noise and vibration, land use, property value effects, and higher construction costs. The most common concerns for those opposing a route across the Seattle Center are visual quality, noise, displacements, and land use. Several comments expressed a desire to avoid displacing the Seattle Glass Blowing Studio in Belltown.

6.5.4 Downtown/Pioneer Square

The most common issue raised by Downtown commenters involved visual impacts such as view obstruction and shading. Historic resources, parking, traffic, impacts to businesses, land use, noise, and construction were also addressed by a number of commenters. Many commenters requested that the Second Avenue bicycle lane be preserved. Specific resources or areas that were mentioned included the Garden of Remembrance, Benaroya Hall, and Pioneer Square. Some letters requested that a direct connection to the retail center (Westlake Center) be maintained via a pedestrian walkway.

6.5.5 SODO/Chinatown International District/Pioneer Square

Many comment letters (about 25) expressed a preference for an alignment on the west side of Third Avenue S due to traffic and truck circulation, access, land use, visual, noise, vibration, and construction impacts to businesses. As mentioned above, many comment letters expressed a preference for an Interbay Operations Center rather than a SODO Operations Center to avoid impacts to businesses in SODO.

6.5.6 West Seattle

Several comments addressed Delridge station alternatives and discussed potential impacts to the natural resources and open space in the vicinity of Longfellow Creek as well as bus access to the station. Many

of these letters requested that SMP study an alignment north of the Nucor steel plant. Many commenters (about 90) expressed a preference for an alignment on 35th Avenue SW and SW Alaska Street and some (about five) expressed a preference for an alignment on Fauntleroy Way SW. Those that oppose the Fauntleroy alignment are concerned about traffic, access to businesses, parking, and construction impacts. Those that oppose a route on 35th and Alaska are concerned about visual quality, traffic, noise, displacements, emergency services, and general residential quality of life issues. Some comments addressed potential impacts to parking in West Seattle, particularly on California Avenue SW, and its impact on businesses and other establishments. Potential station area impacts at the Alaska Junction and Morgan Junction stations were also addressed.

6.5.7 All Segments

Several commenters requested that SMP preserve as many trees as possible. Many comments expressed a desire for bicycle facilities and services such as providing bicycle parking at stations, allowing bicycles on Green Line trains, avoiding the closure of the Second Avenue bicycle lane, and improving bicycle connections to and from the neighborhoods and stations. Several letters discussed general issues including visual impacts, station area safety and maintenance, and construction impacts.